

Advanced Placement United States History Stylistic Suggestions for Writing Assignments

- **Plagiarism** occurs whenever one uses someone else's words or ideas without attribution. It is a form of cheating and is one of the worst academic sins. When writing papers, therefore, you must use your own words, except when you use quotations, in which case you must use quotation marks. Suspected instances of plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty, will be turned over to the appropriate disciplinary authorities.
- When writing an essay, a **brief** introduction that sets the historical context of your topic is usually appropriate. The introduction should contain a **thesis**, a single statement that states what your essay intends to accomplish and lays out the organizational pattern of your essay. Think of your thesis as a road map for your essay.
- **Write in complete sentences.** Vary the length and complexity of your sentences, but make sure that each sentence is clear and has some relationship to what precedes it and what follows it.
- **Connect information in body paragraphs to your thesis statement.** Don't abruptly end a paragraph without expressly connecting its contents to your overall argument.
- **Connect ideas within and between paragraphs using transitional words and phrases** such as however, moreover, therefore, thus, etc.
- A short **conclusion** that ties together your argument with the main points you have presented is usually a good idea – especially if there is a possibility that your essay will be read by a tired grader. In some circumstances, it is appropriate to connect your essay to some future event in history or its overall place in history's scope. But other than making these broad connections (which should only be done briefly), **no new information should be introduced in a conclusion.**
- **Always use the past tense** for historical writing.
- **Avoid the passive voice.** Instead of writing "The student was berated by Mr. Thorburn for not knowing the name of Millard Fillmore's vice-president," write "Mr. Thorburn berated the student for not knowing the name of Millard Fillmore's vice president."

- The first time a person is mentioned in your paper, use the full name. Thereafter the last name is usually sufficient. Drop titles such as Mr., Ms., Mrs., and Dr.
- **Always avoid absolutes.** History is not a science. Rarely in this discipline do things never, always, precisely, or absolutely happen. Be careful when making these claims, and beware of other peoples' absolute claims.
- **Avoid phrases** such as "It is interesting to note," and avoid first person references such as "I feel" and "we see that." **In fact, simply avoid using I, me, we, us, our, you, and your.**
- **Don't use contractions.**
- Underline (or italicize) titles of books, magazines, movies, television shows, newspapers and the names of ships. "Titles of articles, chapters, songs, poems, and short stories" should be placed within quotation marks.
- Only write out numbers as words when the number is less than ten or if the number is the first word of the sentence. Otherwise, use numerals. Use numerals when expressing a dollar amount (ie, \$2.76, \$.05, \$769,022) unless it is an amount over one million. You may then truncate the number and use the word million (or billion, trillion, etc. – ie, \$4.5 billion).
- Words referring to races of people should always be capitalized when referring to a group of people (White settlers, Black sharecroppers). Also the word Internet is a proper noun, and as such should be capitalized.